

WORKING MEMO: 200

DATE: 30 April 1979

TO: All Division Engineers

FROM: Eric H. Bartsch, P.E., Director
Division of Water Programs

SUBJECT: Water & Sewerage - Procedure - Complaint Investigations

BACKGROUND:

One of the more publicly visible and demanding tasks of the Public Health Engineering involves the investigation and resolution (if possible) of complaints. Complaints may involve water and/or wastewater, and be specific or vague, serious or frivolous, real or imagined. Complaints, however, are very real to individuals lodging the complaints, and must receive investigation by the Division of Water Programs. The Division of Water Programs must provide a timely, objective and professional response to any complaint. Frequently, this is our first inkling that something is amiss. Also, quite often, our responsiveness (or lack thereof) sets the political climate in which the Department of Health is viewed.

PROCEDURE:

All complaints received by the Division require documentation. Furthermore, some complaints require on-site visits (including sample analysis and collection, sanitary surveys, technical assistance, manual labor) while others may just require telephone inquiries or notification that another division or agency has the legislative mandate to deal with that particular problem. Effective immediately, all Regional Offices are required to document all complaints received. To assist you in this, a format entitled "Complaint Investigation Sheet" is attached (a full-sized copy is being forwarded to the Regional Director). The applicability of this form is general and should be able to cover most complaints.

DISPOSITION OF FORMS:

When a complaint has been resolved to the maximum extent feasible, one copy of the completed complaint form shall be sent to the appropriate technical services chief for appropriate handling within each bureau. If water and wastewater are involved, a copy shall be sent to each technical services chief.

CONCLUSION:

The Central Office will use the information contained on the complaint sheets in several ways. The first, and most obvious, would be to use the documentation that one complaint has been investigated when formal inquiries are made. Also, the Central Office will analyze the type of complaints to see if there may be common problems in water quality that overlap regional boundaries. Furthermore, this information will be used to determine if additional training sessions are necessary regarding the technical and/or administrative handling of a complaint.

EHB/djv

Enclosure